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BEFORE THE

FREDERICTON ATHENÆUM,

FEBRUARY 21, 1853.

PRINTED AT THE REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY.

FREDERICTON.

J. SIMPSON, PRINTER TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

1853.

THE
NEW BRUNSWICK
MUSEUM

379

ANNUAL DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BY

EDWIN JACOB, D. D., PRESIDENT,

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THE duty of your President on his last day of office has been so expressly assigned, that no excuse could be found for its omission or neglect. Each individual who may have been chosen to occupy this chair for twelve months, is bound to conclude the period with "a discourse upon the proceedings of the past year." And this is one of the fundamental laws constituting the Society; in which it was also enacted, that none of them should be rescinded or altered without certain formalities of a strictly conservative description. A Presidential "Discourse" must therefore be pronounced, and that upon a definite subject —"the proceedings of the past year." The discourser is neither to look back beyond his own year of office, nor forward in anticipation of the future, but to confine his view to the events which have transpired under his own immediate observation.

Nothing, it is true, has been prescribed as to the kind of discourse which the retiring President is required to present. Here he is left at liberty to consult his own taste or inclination. He may read or recite; speak from memory or instantaneous conception; be concise like a Spartan, or prolix as the grave and accurate Puritan, who is said to have approached the conclusion of his Introduction with "Sixty-seventhly, my beloved hearers—and then we enter on the main question;" be plain and simple as any old chronicler, or reflective as Thucydides, impassioned as Tacitus, or insinuating as Gibbon; deal in common-place generalities, or insist on striking particulars; be courtly or censorious—courtly as the historian, who gloriously panegyrizes King Richard the Third as a "model of all princely virtues;" or censorious as the

politico-religious controversialist, who sets down Archbishop Tillotson for "the gravest atheist that ever was."

Not to detain you however with tantalizing apprehensions, as to which of these methods I may have thought fit to adopt, I deem it most in character to present you with a discourse composed and delivered just like one of those, which in earlier years I was accustomed to prepare for the pulpit;—a discourse upon my text, consisting of such observations as may have seemed most natural, and delivered as the thoughts and feelings entertained would naturally find their utterance.

My subject therefore being "The proceedings of the past year," I shall not occupy your time with grammatical, logical, or exegetical disquisitions;—as M. Constant, in his treatise "De la Religion," remarks, has been too much the habit of our English preachers; but honestly review the actual occurrences, as I may be enabled to recal them with the aid of our Secretary's brief but faithful minutes, with a few reflections which they may readily suggest.

And, first, I have to congratulate you on the fact that the Society *has* been "proceeding." If it has not made great progress, it has continued alive and in motion: it has not stood still; it has not gone back; but it has made successive efforts to attain the objects for which it was formed. We have met together, with the exceptions provided or customary, on the several months of the year; and every time in sufficient number to "proceed to business." And if we have had to regret the loss or absence of some of our members, we have been consoled by the accession or reappearance of others.

Our meetings also have been remarkably harmonious. So perfectly well conducted indeed have been all your proceedings, that your President's duty has been, if possible, too light and easy. Sometimes I could almost have wished for a jarring string or two, to break the monotony—sweet and agreeable as it was—of uniformly decorous language

and demeanour. If any thing appeared to me wanting, it was—I may be allowed candidly to confess—a fuller measure of frank social converse, to cherish glowing thoughts and kindling emotions, and encourage the most diffident to contribute to the common fund of information and improvement. One of the ablest speakers of the age, in his Discourse as Lord Rector before the University of Glasgow, fairly warned his youthful audience, that they might find it by no means an easy attainment "to think" (as he emphatically expressed it) "upon their legs;" and I have more than once felt that some of our members may have been deterred from giving us the benefit of their remarks, by the tacitly admitted, though never established, rule of rising to make, what may have seemed to them, set and formal speeches. Of one of the occasions, perhaps I might say causes, of this formidable apprehension we have been relieved by the Resolution, considerately proposed by a reverend gentleman who has furnished abundant evidence that *he* at least had overcome the difficulty, abolishing the Votes of Thanks which had been previously moved and seconded at perhaps every meeting. But I am far from sure whether the substitution of another rule, authorising the President to call upon such members as he thinks proper, to open a discussion upon the papers read before the Society, may not have operated to much the same effect. Your President, it is true, may be presumed to consult the feelings of the several members; but, judging by very limited experience, I should be disposed to say that the power thus held *in terrorem* over every pair of feet, heart and tongue, is rather too terrific to be committed to an unintuitive mortal. I know not indeed that we have any member so thoroughly dumbfounded, as an old captain whom I once heard declare, with reference to a public meeting, that he "would rather march twenty miles, than have to speak twenty words at such a place as that;" but I can readily conceive how those who may not have had the practice, or be conscious of the ability, of a minister

trained in the school of John Knox, or a jurist raised from successful pleading at the bar to the more chaste and dignified eloquence of the bench, might shrink from the task—of speaking with almost no time to collect their thoughts, or labouring to think and speak together, before an attentive though kindly-tempered company, every member of which they must be aware cannot fail to notice their infirmity or confusion. But on this point I have only further to observe that, should my successors at any time unfortunately miscalculate the nervous or vocal powers of any of our members, he may be allowed to copy the example of a major-general, whose marching days were past, while his speaking hours were never to come; and who, when once compelled to rise in a far larger assembly, had the courage to say, "As I am not prepared to offer any remark, I trust I have your permission to—resume my seat."

Possibly some may think it more appropriate for me to remind our junior associates of the method which Lord Brougham recommended at Glasgow, for acquiring the art of ready and copious eloquence. Judging by his own experience, he told his aspiring auditors, that the most effectual method would be found to consist in the habit of *writing* much and frequently on all subjects; so storing the memory with words and phrases, sentences and paragraphs, ready to appear at call; and, being put together, arranged, and suitably applied, to present the aspect of a speech composed on the occasion. This however, it should be remembered, was the experience of *one* great orator: I doubt if many of his compeers would give the same account of their means of success. More commonly, I rather believe, they would attribute it, as far as traceable to any causes beside the powers of natural genius, to the habit of *thinking* steadily and connectedly, and then uttering their thoughts with the manly confidence resulting from conscious ability. For surely the maxim of Horace must be as just, provided the verse would admit the substitution, if we read "*Loquendi*," instead of—

"*Scribendi* recte SAPERE est et principium et fons,
Verbaque provisam *rem* non invita sequentur."

That confidence might be encouraged by the reflection, that if slips and inaccuracies escape our lips, they may very probably escape the notice of other ears; while the critical few will assure us, that they have long since learned to bear with equanimity far grosser violations of propriety of speech.

In concluding this topic I beg leave therefore to acknowledge my hope, that greater freedom of discussion may hereafter follow the reading of papers at our meetings; and that the provision in our laws for *extempore* observations or communications from *any* member on *any* suitable subject, may find a greater proportion disposed to avail themselves of its liberality.

Of the papers which have been read during the successive months, with addresses not previously committed to writing, it is impossible for me to speak in other terms than those of approving gratitude. Every meeting has been favoured with at least one such contribution; and in every instance our expectations have been verified, in some more than fulfilled. My review must be very limited; for the subjects were always of such a nature, and so treated by the readers or speakers, that I could not pretend to pay them the notice which they respectively deserve, in a general retrospect of the proceedings of the year.

At our first meeting in March, our Secretary presented certain documents in connection with our endeavours to obtain for the commercial, as well as the scientific world, accurate statistics of the Tides and Currents of the Bay of Fundy. These endeavours, I ought to add, were warmly encouraged by His Excellency Sir Edmund Head, and most kindly noticed in a farewell letter from the late Sir John Harvey, which was received by me, I lament to say, just after the pen had for ever fallen from his hand. They have also been highly approved by the late Colonial

Minister and Board of Admiralty; and will, I trust, be eventually carried into complete success by Captains Bayfield and Shortland, the accomplished and zealous officers entrusted with the maritime survey of our coasts. Dr. Robb then delivered what I perceive him to have called in the minutes "a Verbal Lecture," but I should rather denominate it an intellectual outpouring, on what he termed "the Law of Limits." His object was "to shew that all created existences are limited or circumscribed within various powers and properties. To man these limits" might have often "seemed arbitrary, as to the Almighty in the first instance" they may be supposed to have been, "that is the results of his own free will. But without doubt they were all so adjusted and harmonized reciprocally" by the Creator "as to secure that wonderful adaptation" which we find to subsist "between the organic and inorganic worlds." I am not certain that we were all alike prepared to estimate the difficulties which a Professor of Chemistry and Natural History might encounter, in his efforts to form a just conception of the question; but every one must have been satisfied that it was fairly discussed, and that the conclusions accorded fully with the phenomena of nature, right reason, and devout reverence for the Supreme Being.

At our April meeting Mr. Roberts read a very comprehensive paper, illustrated, with Professor Jack's skilful assistance, by a variety of representations and experiments, entitled an "Analysis of the first principles of Music." It elicited many curious enquiries and acute remarks, more particularly from Mr. Justice Wilmot; and was, I believe, regarded by every one capable of forming a judgment on the subject, as a just account of the conditions of musical sound, with its combinations and variations in concord and melody.

In May, after some statements respecting the New Brunswick Almanac—such, I regret to add, as to justify, and even require the Society's suspension of the super-

vision which it had so usefully and creditably exercised,—the Rev. Charles Coster read a well-digested dissertation on the "History of Assyria." Most of us probably had impressed upon our memory the honest narrative of Herodotus, so perfectly agreeing, as far as it goes (for the more precise details which the Father of History intended to subjoin, were never written, or they have perished in the lapse of time,) with the facts recorded in the sacred records of the Jews. Some of us had been amused or scandalized at the romantic tales of Ctesias, the Greek physician of Artaxerxes (who Xenophon thought might be fairly entitled to credit for a fact which he stated *concerning the person of his patient*), and his credulous copyists Diodorus and Trogus, concerning the long-enduring dynasty of the universal conqueror Ninus, and his celestial, dove-nourished, and finally translated queen Semiramis. And all had doubtless seen the reports of the exciting discoveries lately made by Rawlinson, Layard, and other explorers of the long-buried relics of ancient pride and majesty. But we could not fail to be gratified with our youthful scholar and divine's appropriate researches, clearly laying before us the architectural, sculptural, and literary (if I may so denominate the brief annals of arrow-head inscriptions,) monuments of kings and nations, long since departed from the view of living men.

The meeting in the month of June was distinguished by an unusually full attendance of members and friendly visiters, who had the peculiar pleasure of hearing our Honorary associate, Mr. Justice Parker, read his paper bearing the title "Biblica Juridica." It was in fact a treatise, concise and unpretending, but remarkable for sagacious elucidation, on the origin and progress of judicial procedure, as discoverable in the historical and other scriptures of the Old Testament. Although Votes of Thanks had been abolished, I could not but feel assured that I should carry with me the approving concurrence of all present, in tendering His Honor the grateful acknow-

ledgments of the Society; nor can I forget the impressive solemnity with which general assent was signified to the sentiment of the Chief Justice, in entire accordance with the principle which might be described as forming the foundation of his learned and pious brother's theory—"that the source from which man derives jurisdiction over his fellow man, is not to be found in mere human ordinances, but in the appointment of the great Lord of all." In compliance with the Society's request, His Honor has had the goodness to present us, not with "a copy prepared for publication," but with copies, printed at his own charge, for the several members of the Athenæum. The desire was further expressed at the meeting, that the same pen might be employed at some future day in tracing the rise and constitution of the Sanhedrim, and the course of judicial procedure through the later periods of Jewish history, in order to a juster appreciation of the trials and judgments of which we read, with feelings better understood than to be now and here expressed, in the affecting narratives of the New Testament.

Our next meeting, after the Society's customary "long vacation," took place in October, when the Master of the Rolls favoured us with a paper on "Early Maritime Discovery;" treating more especially of the alleged discoveries of this continent by adventurers from Northern Europe during the middle ages; and discriminating, with the acumen of an equitable judge, the credit due to the evidence of successive voyagers in this direction, before the finally triumphant "Tierra! Tierra!" of the persevering companions of Columbus. The question, although generally perhaps regarded as interesting antiquaries alone, such as the Danish Society, whose highly patronized prospectus I had the pleasure of presenting to the Athenæum on this occasion, is far from unimportant to the progress of ethnology; or to the student in theology, natural or revealed; who cannot but entertain the desire of reducing to their true sources the varieties of the human race.

That "God hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth," is indeed a great truth; in which such natural historians as Pritchard and Latham are known to agree with the noble apostle of the Gentiles; and every confirmation of this truth, which may be derived from investigating the migrations and intermixtures of mankind, conduces to the establishment of that "faith which (according to the same proclaimer of truly catholic religion) worketh by love;"—the love of our whole race, of whatever modification of form and colour, as "heirs together of the grace of life;" of "the kingdom" of truth, peace, and universal co-operation for universal well-being, "promised by all the holy prophets," and longed for with intense desire by all the wise and good, "from the foundation of the world."

The November paper, read by the Rev. Mr. Ketchum, tended to render us more alive to the style and characteristic excellencies of the prophetic choir. For the subject was "Hebrew Poetry;" and every Hebrew poet, with whose remains we are acquainted, sustained a sacred character; was a prophet of the Most High; glorifying His adorable perfections, and calling on his fellow-worshippers, with "all inhabitants of the world," to learn and do His will. Our clerical friend was not unmindful of this glorious and sublime peculiarity of the Hebrew bards; but, while delineating and exemplifying the structure, form, and external features of their compositions, drew our attention, in impassioned appeals,

"Whose fire was kindled at the prophet's lamp,"

to the truly divine spirit by which they were all animated. The hallowed feeling was evidently communicated; and there could not, I may well assume, be a dissentient to the enthusiasm, with which the minister of another church responded to the eulogies, in which his Episcopalian brother had celebrated—"The Lord who spake" by them, and "whose word was in (their) tongue."

In December the Rev. Mr. Brooke entertained and instructed us with an ingenious and lively, but at the same time judicious (for—

"Ridentem dicere verum
Quid vetat? Ut pueris olim dant crustula blandi
Doctores"—)

view of "The Origin and Progress of Written Language;" tracing it back to the pictures, in which even the rudest tribes are now found to represent objects of sight, through the hieroglyphics of Egypt and other countries, to the alphabets of most civilized nations, and the really more philosophic characters of the Chinese. This lecture was received as the sequel of an enquiry, of which that part which related to oral language, had been presented to a former meeting; and the hope was expressed that our reverend friend may yet further pursue a subject for which he is peculiarly qualified by his store of information, and his happy facility of thought and command of diction.

It remains to remind you of the luminous, elegant, and thoroughly scientific disquisition on "The Human Voice," read at our last meeting in January, by His Honor the Chief Justice. His physiological analysis of the powerful but delicate organism, by which the human pipe pours forth all the varieties of vocal sound, was, I hesitate not to say, as perfect as philosophy could be expected to render it, without the aid of prints and models; or rather indeed without the dissector's, or the *vivisector's*, demonstrations; while to those of our members endowed with that peculiar faculty, a musical ear, more particularly if they had cultivated their musical taste, nothing could be more delightful —except it were

"The human *voice* divine"—

than the explanations given of the nature and varieties, with the assigned or probable causes, of melodious sound. His Honor, who is unquestionably at home in the theory and practice of this charming art, will, it was generally hoped, on some future evening follow out the subject into

the means and modifications, by which the utterance of the throat becomes *articulate* voice; and so constitutes the boundless abundance of words, by which mankind prove and enhance, if they have not primarily attained, their various degrees of superiority over all other animals; conceive at least ideas, embracing distant worlds, and entering into converse with higher beings; and almost justify the daring antithesis of the thoughtful poet of the Night,—

"A worm—a god!"

On a final retrospect of the "proceedings of the year," I know not that I could conclude with a more appropriate sentiment, than to wish the number of the Society's members somewhat more proportionate to the talents and merits of those, whose contributions to our intellectual progress and enjoyment it has been my happy privilege to witness and acknowledge. How the desirable augmentation may be best effected, is a question which I commend to your due consideration. Of that consideration I am persuaded it must be worthy; because you have assuredly rendered the Athenæum in a very considerable measure worthy of its name;—a school of science and literature, such as might have formed an Eclectic Academy in some offset of ancient Athens, and become the improving resort of enquirers after truth and good.

My Discourse has not been so long as some may perhaps have expected, not to say than any could have desired. I cannot plead want of time—of which, with my Collegiate and other engagements, I certainly might have found enough; nor yet deficiency of matter—of which it must be obvious that your own proceedings might have furnished ampler supplies, without looking around at those inviting topics—Railways; Bridges; Telegraphs; Steam and Air-moved Ships; improvements, effected or proposed, in Agriculture, Manufactures, the finer Arts, general and even academic Education. But leaving these to gentlemen who may hereafter, and very fitly, adopt them for separate subjects of celebration or disquisition, I have restricted myself to the distinct impressions made upon my

own mind by what I have actually heard or seen at the meetings of our own Society;—thus adhering, as I have considered it the peculiar duty of the day, to the rule of the poetical critic, which appears equally applicable to compositions in plain prose:—

"Ordinis hæc virtus erit, aut ego fallor,
"Ut jam nunc dicat jam nunc debentia dici;
"Pleraque differat, et præsens in tempus omittat."

Should I allow myself to offer a further suggestion, it would be merely this—whether on some occasions, perhaps during the more clement and serene seasons of the year, our doors might not be opened to others beside the regular members of the Society and their non-resident friends. I well remember the numerous assemblage of orderly and attentive persons, of different ranks and ages, and I may add of both sexes, once attending the popular lectures, given by my estimable coadjutors in the chairs of this College, under the patronage of our then Lieutenant Governor, to whose final departure from another government, and from the fluctuating scenes of the present world, I have had affecting occasion to allude;—and I see no reason why an equally unexceptionable, and probably greater company, might not be advantageously collected, to receive information in several departments of science and literature; illustrated, not merely by the treasures of this Library, but by the more attractive and exciting appliances of our Museum, our Laboratory, our Philosophical Apparatus and Observatory. It has been sometimes recommended that even our ordinary meetings should be transferred to the City below, on the supposition that a more regular attendance might thus be secured. It may however be fairly doubted if much dependence could be placed on their appetite for pure and elevated enjoyment, to whom the few short steps of our exhilirating hill, or the gentler curve through our refreshing grove, very inferior I ween to "the severe ascent of high Parnassus," should present a difficulty too formidable to be overcome.